

## WALL STREET JOURNAL

# When the State Department Wants to Find Out More About Russia, It Often Heads for Harvard

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CAMBRIDGE, Mass.—The line inching into the drab little campus cafeteria bunches up as a group gathers around a stocky, blond man with gold-rimmed glasses and a shiny, foreign-cut suit. There is an excited buzz of conversation, for this is Harvard University's Russian Research Center (RRC) and a real live Soviet functionary has arrived for lunch.

The visitor, Boris N. Slavinsky, is a professor of Soviet Far Eastern foreign policy at an outpost of the prestigious Soviet Academy of Sciences in Vladivostok. He is barely seated at one of the tables before the questions begin to flow:

"What do you think of the prospects for Soviet oil and gas production in eastern Siberia?" an economist wants to know. "How are your discussions with the Japanese over the Kurile Islands going?" asks a political scientist, shifting into Russian to clear the language hurdle.

The questioning is so intense that Prof. Slavinsky barely has time to gulp his meal, but he takes it good-naturedly. His hosts—the 100 or so scholars of the RRC—like to think of themselves as this country's foremost collection of experts on Russia. And, although some will challenge this self-appraisal, chances are that among Americans who actually have dealings with the Russians the Cambridge center does indeed stand near the top of the list of research sources.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's newly appointed foreign policy adviser, is an alumnus of the Center as are scores of lesser officials in the State Department and the foreign ministries of other nations. When Mr. Carter, before he took office, wanted an assessment of the prospects and potential problems of Soviet-American trade, he commissioned a position paper from Wellesley College economist Marshall Goldman, associate director of the Center.

And when American Express Co. wants to know whether it should think about issuing credit cards in Eastern Europe, its planners reach for a paper on "Prospects for Ruble Convertibility" by Tufts University Professor Franklyn Holzman, an associate here.

## Financial Pressures

Yet at the moment when the Center is enjoying possibly its peak in prestige, financial pressures are forcing controversial changes in its method of operation. The drying up of foundation grants, mainly from the Ford Foundation, has sent RRC out hustling for research contracts, mainly from large corporations. The Center's budget this year is planned at \$105,000, barely more than the \$100,000 a year it used to get from the Ford Foundation alone.

In an attempt to restore the good old days of funded fellowships and freewheeling research, the Center, along with Columbia University's Russian Institute, has announced a joint \$2.6 million fund drive, aimed mainly at business. It has set up a corporate sponsor program under which representatives of such firms as Coca-Cola Co., Armco Steel Corp., Dillon, Read & Co. and others can attend RRC's seminars, use its library and receive its research materials in return for an annual fee. Contract research is bringing in another \$70,000 and the Commerce Department is chipping in another \$32,100 for a series of seminars to which businessmen are invited at a price of \$100 a day.

"When you are broke, you thrash out in all directions," comments Prof. Goldman.

Cozying up to corporations has bred some misgivings, however. Harvard historian Richard Pipes, a member of the executive committee here, says, "A lot of businessmen are hesitant to finance us for fear of antagonizing the Russians." That creates "the problem of justifying ourselves to the business community that we aren't hostile" or anti-Soviet, he says. And that extraneous concern, Prof. Pipes suggests, might not be good for scholarship.

## A Growing Business Link

Adam B. Ulam, former director of the Center and a member of the executive committee, also is apprehensive. "We would rather have people work on what's interesting than tailor their work to the availability of funds," he says.

But others are more sanguine about the increasing business link. "Sure there's unease, but it's also healthy that we're open to every viewpoint," observes Prof. Goldman, who finds contact with businessmen dealing with the Russians helpful in his work on the Soviet economy. "Scholars traditionally looked down their noses at corporations," he says. "Now we get their input. We're exposed to more ideas."

As for any undue influence on research by financial contributors, Edward Keenan, medieval historian and director of the Center, says he isn't worried. "Harvard has very strict rules about that," he says.

As it is, there is neither a "research policy" nor a prevailing "RRC viewpoint" on any question to be influenced, Prof. Keenan insists. Opinions on detente, for example, range from the skepticism of professors Pipes and Ulam to the enthusiasm of Prof. Goldman for U.S. concessions in the interests of increased trade.

Center staffers, who consist of a handful of Harvard faculty, scholars from nearby institutions plus graduate students and "visitors" with fellowships, work on what they

feel like or find remunerative. Most contracts go to individuals who fork over a cut to the Center. Work in progress runs the gamut from studies of Soviet economic planning to clan relationships in medieval Russia.

Ironically, several big Japanese multinationals—Mitsubishi, Komatsu and C. Itoh—were availing themselves of RRC resources well before the Center's current push for corporate sponsorship. Nobuo Sugahara, a 25-year-old junior executive in Itoh's grain trading department, figures his company is spending \$60,000 for his current year at RRC. His mission: Learn Russian, study Soviet-American trade and write a paper for his employer on the reaction of the U.S. government and business to the current Soviet five-year plan.

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